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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2482
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, APRIL 9, 2007

In Today's Papers

Barzani Statement Angers Ankara

All papers report over the weekend and today the regional Iraqi Kurdish administration president Massoud Barzani said in televised remarks on al-Arabiyah television on Saturday that Turkey must not interfere in Kirkuk, warning, "There are 30 million Kurds in Turkey; if they interfere in Kirkuk over just a couple thousands of Turkmen, we will interfere in Diyarbakir and other cities in Turkey." Sunday papers reported the Barzani statement with headlines, "Barzani goes too far," "Barzani threatens Turkey," and "Barzani signals unrest among Turkey's Kurds." Hurriyet reports Turkey's special Iraqi envoy Oguz Celikkol will be sent to the US to tell Washington that Turkey will take the necessary steps in response to Barzani. Radikal reports Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul phoned Secretary Rice saying that Barzani should be warned not to repeat such statements.

Barzani continued remarks on Sunday, saying an independent Kurdish state could be established in 10-15 years, papers report, citing a report by Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party's (KDP) Peyamner news agency. "Turkey's cause is not Kirkuk and the PKK, but the existence of the Kurdish people," he was also quoted as saying. Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) sources said the reason for Barzani to make such an inappropriate statement is "his panic due to the international community's rising awareness of what is going on in Kirkuk." "We have always said Kirkuk is an Iraqi city," Turkish diplomatic sources said. MFA sources told Cumhuriyet that "Barzani is sitting on a pile of dynamite, and if he lights the fuse, he will not even be able to pronounce the 'D' of Diyarbakir. Barzani should know his place and should not dare spell Diyarbakir's name." The same sources said Barzani was distressed to see no support from the US, the international community, and other groups in Iraq, and the fact that Turkey established contact not with him but Iraq's President Talabani. Hurriyet says Barzani's statement would be discussed at the National Security Council (MGK) meeting on Tuesday.

Editorial Commentary on Kirkuk, Barzani Warning Turkey
Zafer Atay comments in the economic-political daily Dunya: "There will no longer be any need for the Kurdish Administration in Northern Iraq -- developing under the US troops' wings with every passing day - to have a referendum in Kirkuk because the Kurdish Administration is carrying out an ethnic cleansing in Kirkuk and sending the Arab population to other places by so-called voluntary methods. Barzani has managed to bring 600,000 Kurds into Kirkuk so far, using the excuse that he is bringing Kurds who were expelled back to Kirkuk. What is going on in Kirkuk now is an anti-democratic, primitive cleansing. Barzani, with the support he gets from the US, openly threatened Turkey and said that they will interfere with 30 million Kurds in Turkey. Let us say only this much: the US is not going to remain there infinitely and when they leave Iraq, you will face us on your own. To avoid future regrets, I suggest, you think before you talk."

Mustafa Balbay criticizes the ruling AK Party for its Iraq policies in the leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "The AKP Government's stance clearly shows that internal and regional security issues do not interest the AKP. That is why the US and others who get US support continue insulting Turkey. Kurdish leader Barzani, in this recent interview with al-Arabiya, openly threatened Turkey, saying he would interfere with the Kurds living in Turkey. On the same day, US former Chief of General Staff Richard Myers, in an interview with VOA, said that Turkey will have to face US troops if they interfere in Northern Iraq and the 'Suleymaniye incident' might repeat itself. This is US friendship for you! Barzani is talking about Turkish territory and General Myers is stressing that the US is responsible for northern Iraq. Even though the situation seems complicated, in fact, it is very clear: the US is playing and Talabani is dancing and the fact is that Turkey's neighbor in the south is not Iraq but

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the US."

Follow-up Iraq Meeting to be Held in Sharm al-Sheikh
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report a follow up meeting of Iraq, its neighbors and officials from G8 nations and the European Union will be held in Egypt in the first week of May, Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said over the weekend. The gathering had been expected to take place in Istanbul in early April but Zebari said the Iraqi government wanted it to be "in Egypt on May 3-4." Unnamed Turkish Foreign Ministry sources told Radikal that Iraqi Kurdish leaders Barzani and Talabani had a role in shifting the venue from Istanbul to Egypt's Sharm al-Sheikh resort. They also said Kurdish leaders exploited the US reaction to an alleged al-Qaeda linked Iraqi Sunni group meeting in Istanbul in February. The paper claims Secretary Rice told Foreign Minister Gul that she will work for another Iraq meeting to be held in Turkey. Zaman reports Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Muhammad Ali Huseyni said, despite the announcement by Zebari, the date and venue of the meeting was not yet set. Huseyni also said a meeting between Iranian and American officials was "not on their agenda."

9 Soldiers, 4 PKK Fighters Killed in Southeast Turkey
All papers report Turkish military operations against the PKK militants in southeast Turkey left nine members of security forces and four PKK fighters dead over the weekend. In Ankara over the weekend, thousands attended the funeral of a second-lieutenant killed by a PKK landmine in the southeastern province of Bitlis. The funeral was also joined by Turkish General Staff (TGS) chief Yasar Buyukanit, force commanders, Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul, and some parliamentarians. In the eastern province of Erzurum on Sunday, some 20,000 participated in the funeral of a sergeant killed by the PKK in Bitlis.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy 2006 Report
Mainstream Sabah carried on Saturday excerpts from US State Department "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The US Record 2006" report, the US has been pressing for the opening of the Greek Orthodox Halki Seminary in Istanbul. The report says non-Muslim religious groups and Alevis continued to face restrictions on practicing their religion, and that religious communities such as Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Bahai have been banned in

Turkey. Milliyet reports on Sunday the report says the AKP government "faced major challenges, such as reducing restrictions on free speech, and modernizing societal attitudes with respect to practices such as 'honor killings' of women." "Although reform of the criminal code helped to reduce torture and improve due process for defendants, the government struggled to fully implement the new laws," the report is cited as saying.

TV News:
(NTV, 8 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Over the weekend, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said in a meeting with businessmen and NGO representatives in Bursa that the AKP had still made no decision about its presidential candidate.

- Deputy Prime Minister Abdullatif Sener said all 353 AKP MPs support Erdogan as president.

- A woman PKK terrorist and her two accomplices were captured after she left a bag containing 3kg of A-4 explosives in front of a kiosk in Istanbul's crowded Taksim square.

- Three members of the extreme leftist DHKP-C (Dev-Sol) terrorist organization were captured while preparing to stage bomb attacks in Istanbul and Adana.

- The Turkish Council of State (Danistay) has rejected the

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objections of Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir to an investigation into a Kurdish-language invitation distributed by Diyarbakir Municipality.

International News

- A car bomb killed 17 people and wounded dozens in Mahmudiya town south of Baghdad, and four US soldiers were killed in an explosion in north of the capital.

- Iranian state television reported an Iranian diplomat freed two months after being abducted in Iraq accused the CIA of torturing him during his detention.

- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said Ankara is working to rescue two Turkish engineers abducted on Friday night in volatile oil-rich southern Nigeria.

- Israel is reportedly reviewing the names of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners that Gaza militants want released in exchange for the Israeli soldier Ghilad Shalid abducted in June by Hamas.

WILSON